

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 635
SPONSOR(S): Grimsley
TIED BILLS:

Citrus Canker Eradication

IDEN./SIM. BILLS: SB 292

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Agriculture Committee		Kaiser	Reese
2) Agriculture & Environment Appropriations Committee			
3) State Resources Council			
4) _____			
5) _____			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Citrus canker is a bacterial disease of citrus that causes premature leaf and fruit drop. It is highly contagious and can be spread rapidly by wind borne rain, non-decontaminated lawnmowers and other landscaping equipment, people carrying the infection on their hands, clothing or equipment, or by moving infected or exposed plants or plant parts. To date, there is no known cure for citrus canker. Scientists continue to agree that the only way to eradicate the disease is to remove infected citrus trees and those located within 1,900 feet of infected trees (exposed).

Based on research conducted by Dr. Timothy Gottwald, a scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), "exposed to infection" refers to citrus trees located within 1,900 feet of an infected tree. This term, "exposed to infection," was codified in statute during the 2002 legislative session. At the same time, the Legislature provided for a repeal of the definition effective July 1, 2005 with a mandatory review by the Legislature prior to that date.

This legislation repeals section 4 of chapter 2002-11, Laws of Florida, which calls for the review and repeal of the term "exposed to infection" effective July 1, 2005.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

The bill does not appear to implicate any of the House Principles.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Citrus canker is a bacterial disease of citrus that causes premature leaf and fruit drop. It is highly contagious and can be spread rapidly by wind borne rain, non-decontaminated lawnmowers and other landscaping equipment, people carrying the infection on their hands, clothing or equipment, or by moving infected or exposed plants or plant parts. To date, there is no known cure for citrus canker. Scientists continue to agree that the only way to eradicate the disease is to remove infected citrus trees and those located within 1,900 feet of infected trees (exposed).

Florida has been battling citrus canker since 1995, when an infestation occurred in an urban backyard very near Miami International Airport. Unfortunately, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) were not able to contain the disease in the urban setting.

The eradication program was nearly halted in November 2000 by a Broward County Circuit Court order. Additional court orders in May 2002 from the same judge continued to restrict eradication activity. In that order, the judge declared unconstitutional the statute passed by lawmakers in the 2002 session. (Requiring the department to remove not only infected trees, but also exposed trees located within 1,900 feet of infected ones.)

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Applying his order statewide, the judge also struck down the portion of the law that allows for search warrants for a county-wide area. In response, DACS now obtains individual search warrants to remove infected and exposed trees and to search nearby properties to determine the extent of the outbreak. However, prior to obtaining search warrants, DACS sends Public Information Officers (PIOs) door to door seeking homeowner permission for tree removal.

As a result of these previous legal actions, the program was working under severe constraints and the disease continued to spread in southeast Florida and was moved by property owners to several other counties.

Every order issued by the Broward Circuit Judge was subsequently overturned by the Fourth District Court of Appeal in West Palm Beach. The question of the constitutionality of the tree removal statute went before the Florida Supreme Court and the law was upheld in February 2004. The High Court called the program a proper use of state powers.

This legislation repeals section 4 of chapter 2002-11, Laws of Florida, which calls for the review and repeal of the term "exposed to infection" effective July 1, 2005.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Repeals section 4 of chapter 2002-11, Laws of Florida.

Section 2: Provides an effective date of upon becoming law.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None

2. Expenditures:

None

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None

2. Expenditures:

None

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The bill does not require counties or municipalities to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds, does not reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate, and does not reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES